7. Use What You Know

Introduction

A portion of the Hooe Dependency Site (foreground) in Manassas National Battlefield Park before intersection improvements began. (Douglas Hembrey)

The interpretation of archeological materials and sites in the National Parks aims to communicate the transcendent meanings of these special resources in order to gather public support for their protection. Interpreters find that their methods work, and report seeing a deeper level of appreciation and care about resources.

Archeologists in their "interpreter hats" offer the public an authoritative guide to making emotional and mental connections to the resources. They reinforce the mission and ideals of the NPS for setting aside places under special protections for the fulfillment and use of the public. Interpretation can be a greatly rewarding experience for the archeologist and the visitor alike. But we're not going to kid you – interpretation takes time, patience, and practice. It can feel daunting until you become comfortable with the process, are confident in your skills, and find the methods that work best for you.

So how will you "hook" your audience? How will you know when the interpretation is effective? Professional interpreters have spent a lot of time on figuring out methods to evaluate their programs. One of their methods is collaboration and sharing what works – and doesn't – with each other. This section provides a variety of case studies and exercises to help you develop more fully compelling stories to make rewarding interpretive experiences at your site.

Compelling Stories

"Compelling Stories" is a way of thinking in interpretation that encourages personal relationships with park resources by engaging people's hearts and minds. Interpreters use Compelling Stories to develop the essential and relevant stories of each park. They also apply the interpretive process -- tangible icons, intangible meanings, and universal concepts – to create the stories. People, as a result, learn to relate resources to larger contexts and concepts such as society, culture, and history.

The Compelling Story idea recognizes that not everyone will view or relate to NPS resources in the same way. The people who initially identified the National Parks or National Landmarks as places worthy of special consideration included historians, naturalists, politicians, and citizens' groups. They saw them as significant to and representative of the values and interests of the American people because they talked about the contributions of "great men" or important places. The critical lens of interpretation, however, reveals in these same sites many more layers of storytelling opportunities that tap a wider range of people, their interests, beliefs, and feelings.

Stewardship is one favorable outcome that Compelling Stories foster. Stewardship is an important, key mission of archeologists as interpreters. Interpreters find that if people find personal relevance in the resources they are more likely to help archeologists and the NPS protect and preserve them. Archeological interpretations with compelling stories help to sensitize visitors as to why the legislative protections are in place and, ideally, the ways they can encourage further preservation and appropriate use of archeology.

For Your Information

The Society for Historical Archaeology published a special issue called "Archaeologists as Storytellers" in 1998 (38:1). It contains examples of the stories archeologists have put together to discuss the histories of sites across the United States. Take a look to gain inspiration for putting life and interest into your interpretations, even if you aren't planning to speak in the historical first-person. Check out in particular the one-act play by Arian Praetzellis and Mary Praetzellis, a dialogue between an archeologist and a Gold-Rush era historical figure, as an example on discussing archeology with someone who knows nothing about it.

Use What You Know

Write a paragraph or create an outline for a compelling story about the archeological resources preserved in your park.

Evaluating Compelling Stories

This brief section provides an intensive set of questions to help you evaluate the strength of the compelling story. It's difficult to know how the story affects an audience. Ideally, they move from not caring about a resource to finding personal relevance and the inspiration to find out more on their own. Interpretive success is measured in an audience by increased curiosity, not by some notion that they have gotten it all. Indeed, visitors may not process or realize their full connectivity with the resource and its meaning until later, after talking with family and friends about their experiences or applying the knowledge and ideas to new situations.

Use What You Know: *Assess Your Knowledge* (#8 of 10)

Use these questions to evaluate the Compelling Story you wrote.

Guidelines for measuring the effect of compelling stories:

- Does the story move the visitor?
- Do visitors care more about the resource because of the story?
- Are visitors moved to some action that supports the stewardship of the resource?
- Is the story emblematic? Does it represent some larger concept or meaning?
- How does it connect to that larger meaning?
- Can visitors clearly understand the connection?
- Does the compelling story touch on a universal concept that is relevant to the visitor?
- Is the story at its very core something that people care about?

For Your Information

Using the Revised Framework

The 1994 revision of the NPS thematic framework helps interpreters as a conceptual tool to develop knowledge of the resources in order to evaluate what stories there are to be told about a particular NPS unit. Understanding the holistic and interconnected story of the resource contributes to the goal of telling compelling stories which represent the greater meaning or significance of the resources. The framework is not a cookbook, but an interpreter who works with it will find a tool there to promote good interpretation.

The thematic framework may also be helpful as an interpreter evaluates the stories that are available for telling. The key to successfully using the framework to organize knowledge of the resources is to start broadly and then narrow down the stories to the most compelling ones. The most compelling stories are those whose outcomes promote visitors' understanding of a park's purpose and significance. These often are holistic stories that lead the visitor to understanding a park's mission, purpose and the significance of park resources.

Use What You Know: *Assess Your Knowledge* (#9 of 10)

We turn this section over to you. Use your answers to the Use What You Know sections, the case studies, and examples from your own park to work through the questions below.

1. Name a place managed and preserved in your park for its archeological significance.
2. Connect the place to its larger contexts, such as cultural systems or processes, ideas, values, historical and natural trends.
3. Identify the story that emerges from the connection of site to context. Is the story representative of a larger or universal meaning? Can you identify places to emphasize emotional connections and relevance?

Use the story you have created as the case study for the questions that follow.

> "Think of a story or 'set' of information that you interpret. Then reexamine Tilden's principles listed and consider the following questions:
>
> A. What is the *revelation* we seek for park visitors?
>
> B. What thoughts or actions do we hope to *provoke*?
>
> C. What *whole* are we trying to communicate to visitors?
>
> D. Why do we, as an agency, believe interpretation is important? What do we wish to accomplish?"

How can you link the archeological resources and interpretive themes to illuminate:

> Conflict between people or cultures
>
> Conflict between people and natural systems
>
> Internal conflicts within individual with broader implications
>
> Resolution of conflict
>
> Non-resolution of conflict
>
> Consequences of action
>
> Consequences of inaction
>
> Commitment to universals (courage, politics, religion, ethnicity, violence, family, sacrifice, love, hate)

What other universal concepts might the resources in your area discuss?

Case Studies Gallery

Public Archeology at Fort Vancouver

Douglas C. Wilson here describes his approach to conducting public tours of Fort Vancouver NHS.

National Park Service archeologist giving an archeological walking tour at the reconstructed north gate at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. (Douglas C. Wilson)

In October of 1999, during the Oregon and Washington archeology month celebrations, I gave the first archeological walking tour of Fort Vancouver. It was a perfect Fall day in the Pacific Northwest: the air was crisp, the sky was clear, and there was only a hint of the long winter rains that would start later that month. The large group assembled was eager to learn. I have always believed that archeology is a very unique way of seeing the world, one that reveals fresh new insights from old discarded things. It was great fun to explain the significance of Fort Vancouver through these eyes. I started with a brief summary of the fur-trade post (1829-1860) and military fort (1849-1948) and its importance in the settlement of the area by Americans and the development of the Pacific Northwest though World War II. I then revealed that hundreds of thousands of artifacts, in context, lay directly beneath our feet and shared that these comprised the most important resource of the park and one of the primary reasons for its preservation. I indicated how these small pieces of debris—shards of glass, ceramic sherds, rusty nails, buttons, beads, and buckshot—are the direct, tangible, put-in-your-hand evidence for the people (both famous and common) and the events and activities (both significant and mundane) that had occurred at the site. I explained how these artifacts and features tell us how buildings were constructed, how they were used, and what people did in and around them.

I spent some time talking about the differences between history and archeology and how they are complementary and can be used to tell a fuller and more poignant story of the past, but also how archeology can be used to verify historical records and accounts. I also spoke about fieldwork and showed them the site datum (hidden under a water service cap). I explained how geographic information systems (GIS) have helped us tie in all the past excavations (over 50 years of them) to a single computer database. This GIS also contains layers of information on historic structure locations from historical maps and current conditions that we can compare and study to help us better preserve and interpret the site.

We peered down the old Well #2 shaft in the northeast corner of the stockade, marveling at the size of the boulders used to line the well. I explained the significance of these “shaft features” and how wells, pits, and privies were often used for refuse disposal, making them “time capsules” of 19th century remains. We talked about the many layers of history at the site and I pointed out the brown areas of grass that mark the subsurface remnants of the World War I Spruce Mill. The Spruce Mill was a U.S. Army undertaking that cut large amounts of Spruce lumber to make early aircraft, while significantly changing (and modernizing) the local lumber industry. One of the most obvious additions to the site caused by the Spruce Mill is about a foot of cobbles and gravels that cover and protect the earlier 19th century deposits. I mentioned the flood of 1894, the largest recorded flood in Columbia River history, and how a thin layer of silt was deposited across the fort site—the remnants of that catastrophic event. Below this flood were the remains of the U.S. Army post and earlier fur trade fort.

Artifacts, such as this hand-wrought nail, help visitors understand the past. (Douglas C. Wilson)

The highlight of the tour was the walk out to the Hudson’s Bay Company “Kanaka” Village. The Village was where most of the workers and their families at the fort lived. The Village was a unique multicultural community which included French-Canadians, Scots, Irish, Native Hawaiians, Iroquois, and people from over 30 other regional Native American groups. I pointed out where the pond was, which had been filled with Hudson’s Bay Company and U.S. Army debris from the 19th century, and the location of the hospital – a legacy of the epidemics that swept the area in the early 1830s. I also mentioned the Civilian Conservation Corps headquarters and barracks complex that lay lightly on top of the house and garden sites of the villagers and chatted about its significance in history.

Archeologists screen for artifacts on a Kids Digs program at Fort Vancouver NHP. (Douglas C. Wilson)

The tour was highly successful, and provided a very different and broader view of Fort Vancouver than the visitor gets when viewing the ca. 1845 reconstructed buildings and stockade. The tour began the development of a Public Archaeology program at Fort Vancouver. Now, as one of the many programs at the fort, archeologists and interpreters together tell the story of Fort Vancouver using an archeological perspective. One of the most exciting events is the annual field school. University students from around the nation come to a seven-week dig at the fort site to learn the techniques of archeology. One of the most unique parts of the program is the workshop, given by one of the park's interpreters, which gives the students some fundamental skills in interpretation. As part of the curriculum the students are required to interpret the dig site to the visiting public. The students report what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what we are finding. It is sometimes daunting to students who are most familiar with dead, static things, to have to interact directly with the interested public, but it is one of the most rewarding parts of the training. It forces student archeologists to explain themselves in terms that are readily understandable and succinct, something that will benefit them long after the shovels and screens are stored and the excavations are backfilled.

Another important component of the public archeology program is the Kid's Digs. Archaeologists and interpreters make mock dig sites in large gray bins. Layers are created to mimic the layers at Fort Vancouver, representing the Hudson's Bay Company, the U.S. Army, and modern times. Children are given a short talk on archeology at the Fort site and then get to "excavate" the bins, layer by layer, recording their "finds" on forms, and bagging the artifacts. The boundless energy of the children, combined with the love for the field of the professional and student archeologists, and the expertise of the park interpreters creates an amazing synergy. It brings a new perspective to everyone on what we are trying to do and protect at Fort Vancouver. To me the most moving part of the Kid's Digs program was developed by Interpreter Ed Reidell and Museum Technician Tessa Langford. At the end of the program, the ranger asks the children, "Who owns the artifacts found at Fort Vancouver?" and begins pointing to individual children, parents, and staff. The children uniformly deny that anyone individually owns these artifacts. At that point, the ranger says, "You're all wrong!" as he points to each one in turn "You own it…and you own it…and you own it…WE ALL OWN IT! It belongs to all of us and to future generations of Americans." That's why it's *not* OK to pick artifacts up and take them away with you.

Students excavate a site at Fort Vancouver NHS with archeologists. (Douglas C. Wilson)

Public archeology at Fort Vancouver, through its public tours, public lectures, kid's digs program, field school, and other programs has brought new energy, new perspectives, and a new appreciation of the cultural resources protected by the National Park Service. The close collaboration between interpreters and cultural resources specialists continues to be a key to the success of the program and has enriched the quality of service and preservation message that we provide to the public.

by Douglas C. Wilson, Ph.D., National Park Service

People in the Past
This case study of Lowry Ruins describes CD-ROM technology for the interpretation of archeology to students.

One method for reaching the public is through virtual archeology, or the interpretation of archeology through technology. "People in the Past," a CD-ROM produced by the Bureau of Land Management's Anasazi Heritage Center and the Southwest Natural and Cultural Heritage Association, is an interactive multimedia program. It places you before Lowry Ruin in southwest Colorado, a National Historic Landmark managed by the BLM. From there, you are on your own to discover the 800-year-old pueblo. "People in the Past" uses many technological tools and interpretive methods to bring Lowry Ruin and its people to life: sound, animation, QuickTime/video, stills, and 3D imaging.

The CD enables the viewer to explore pathways to learn about archeological and Native American perspectives. On a wooden welcoming sign are the engraved faces of an archeologist and a Native American woman. Click either and hear them talk about the site as a focus of study or as a center of cultural identity, both with a reverence evident throughout the program. The human figures are fashioned after models that the designers bought and then re-touched digitally, producing 24 individual characters. Computer-animated landscapes are difficult to render convincingly, but software made specifically for the purpose—Questar's World Construction Set—got the results the artists wanted. The archeologist's tent showcases what the software can do. The visitor can operate a laptop, a VCR, a CD player, and more. Inserting a slide into the microscope and seeing the grinding marks on a mano shows the visitor archeology's ability to inform us about the people of the past.

The BLM has established a permanent version of "People in the Past" on a Macintosh computer at the Anasazi Heritage Center. The museum is visited by between 5,000 and 6,000 schoolchildren as well as 35,000 adults each year. Technology, anthropology, and ancient tradition come together in a campaign to reach the public. If people can see a pueblo live before them on screen, they are more likely to see it as far greater in the sum of its parts than a desert oddity or a souvenir trove.

Adapted from:

Flanagan, Joseph
1999 Imagining Lowry: A Puebloan Village Rises in Cyberspace, The Future of Public Archeology, *Common Ground*, Winter.

Above Ground Archeology
Thomas Schlereth provides a useful approach to writing media and lesson plans about archeology.

Thomas Schlereth includes "above-ground archeology," a term he borrows from he late NPS archeologist John L. Cotter, in his toolkit for teaching the public history of the United States. His approach is useful for archeologists who do interpretation because it shows how a variety of materials can be used together to talk the past and modern significance of a place without an excavation and in places where buildings, structures, and landscape are part of the story.

Above-ground archeology concentrates on material objects and physical sites as primary evidence. It involves a lot of fieldwork—actually going to and working with places first hand—as a fundamental research technique and also draws on anthropology and sociology. The "digging" into the past is done without subsurface investigation and although his approach is metaphorically connected to the subsurface work done by professional archeologists, Schlereth's approach applies well for interpretive and educational programs and in teaching an stewardship message.

Schlereth applies these ideas to sites particularly around the state of Indiana:

- **Geological/Geographical Features:**
  Fort Wayne owes its existence largely to the fact that it was a military garrison commanding the portage between the Maumee and the Wabash river systems and the Great Black Swamp. A settlement grew up around the military post partly in service to travelers choosing to circumvent the swamp rather than cut through it.

- **Landscape Vegetation:**
  the Osage orange tree, originally native to the south-central United States and named for the Indians of that area, became the chosen wood for fencing posts. It was used until the invention of barbed wire.

- **Place and Street Names:**
  Auburn, a town in Indiana, was laid out in 1836 and was named by early settlers from Auburn, New York whose ancestors had come from the English village of Auburn. Local historians Ronald Baker and Marvin Comody relate another origin that, "a group of local Indians were sitting about a fire in this vicinity when one of them stuck his hand in the fire. With understandable quickness, he removed it, shouting, 'Ah, burn!' The natives, indigenous and imported, have called it such ever since."

- **Street Histories:**
  A walk along the streets of the river town Madison in Jefferson County, Indiana helps visitors understand the early plat lines as they relate to growth in relationship to water-based industries.

- **Vernacular Building:**
  The bricks, nails, and other architectural or construction material found by archeologists makes little sense to visitors as a pile or in a photograph. If buildings remain around the site, point out any similarities between them and the excavated buildings.

- **Working Places:**
  The landscape of work remains from the early steel mills in Gary to the American Car and Foundry at New Albany to other mills and factories around Indiana. Many sources exist that discuss industrial archeology and the relationship to public history and help us understand local community history and the history of technology, labor, business, and government.

- **Commercial Archaeology:**
  Schlereth advises looking to roadside culture for insights on American life. In the automobile, restaurants, garbage, and other material culture that lines our road lies information about how our culture lives and moves.

Try It Yourself

You can also consider Schlereth's above-ground archeology as a way to think about conveying archeological research at your park in an interpretive program. How can you convey the research process that took place before excavation began? What resources were used in that process that could become part of an interpretive program as illustrative media? How can you use these materials to get visitors thinking archeologically?

Adapted from:

Schlereth, Thomas
1996 Artifacts and the American Past, AltaMira, Walnut Creek. 184-203.

An Archeologist tackles the challenge of interpretive writing
Barbara Little here describes the process she undertook to develop as an interpretive writer.

Ceramic artifact found during excavations in Washington, D.C.

I took on the challenge of interpretive writing when I accepted an invitation from one of our partners to produce a walking guide to archeology in Washington, DC. The archeologist for the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office and I identified the audience as visitors to the city and the distribution point as the new City Museum of Washington, which would include a working archeology laboratory as one of its educational programs.

I've written dozens of articles and book chapters for various audiences, but these were informational pieces rather than interpretive. The good news is that different writing styles are learnable skills. The more difficult news is that it requires both genuine effort and flexibility to learn. If that sounds like a recipe for a workout, it is. We often learn our writing styles without being conscious of our influences. We do that well and, unfortunately, almost without thinking as we learn what style memos and letters are acceptable in our bureaucracies and businesses. We learn to write academically in an academic setting and bureaucratically in an agency setting. To learn interpretive writing, I found that I had to free myself of those confines and accept only the boundaries of my own passionate interest in the archeological stories.

I had the good fortune to attend an Interpretive Writing workshop with *Legacy* editor Alan Leftridge prior to the 2002 NAI meetings in Virginia Beach. Part of the success of the workshops was due to practice (yes, you get to write while you're there) and instant critical response from peers. The Interpretive Development Program's Module 230 also will lead you through the necessary skills. It is important to get a lot of honest feedback from others who understand the interpretive process, including *tangibles*, *intangibles*, *universals* and the need to provide audience *opportunities to connect* intellectually and/or emotionally with the resource.

So, what is the hook? What sparks interest? What makes a reader continue? In an academic article or a site report, the hook is the reader's own need for the information. Every archeologist has sloughed through some miserably convoluted writing to find information crucial for current research. Specialized academic writing is important and it has its place, but we cannot expect non-specialists to care enough to struggle through it.

Brochure.

To write "Washington Underground: Archaeology in Downtown Washington DC, a walking and metro guide to the past" I had to read a lot of site reports. It was a struggle to find the hooks that would lead me to good stories. Frustrated, I found myself railing at my absent colleagues: Why couldn't they just tell me something interesting? Why were the important findings buried deep within the commonplace?

I set several goals for this walking guide. At one level, I just want to inform readers that there is indeed archeology in the downtown of this major urban area. At another level, I want the reader to see that archeology can contribute to major historical and contemporary issues, like public health, immigration and racism. At the next level, I want the reader to come up with the opinion that it is worth pursuing archeology in the city and that preservation laws that support it are worthwhile.

To illustrate the "before" and "after" of learning interpretive writing techniques, I offer the example of written descriptions of the same site. This one happens to be the only NPS site on the map. You can find the whole guide on another partner's web site at <http://www.heritage.umd.edu/DCArchaeologyTour.htm>.

I wrote this informational version first.

> The Petersen House
>
> In 1849 a German immigrant family purchased some land and erected a house on this property at 516 10th Street, NW. William and Anna Petersen had six children and took in boarders as well. The archaeological remains of domestic life contain such objects as a bone domino piece and clay marbles. Straight pins and buttons of bone, shell, metal and glass may be associated with William Petersen's trade as a tailor. Some other materials may be related to boarders at the house. Henry and Julius Ulke were brothers who boarded with the Petersens in the 1860s. Their trade was photography but they were also amateur entomologists. A microscope slide amid the remains may have been associated with their study of insects. In April 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was carried to this house after being shot at Ford's Theatre, which is directly across the street. He died in the bedroom of the upstairs portion of the addition.

Here is the interpretive revision.

> In the Path of History
> If you were Louisa Petersen, perhaps you would remember moving to this neighborhood with your parents to the house they built here in 1849. Perhaps you heard stories of the old country and dreams about the future and realized that you were joining other families who had come from Germany to make a new life in the United States.
>
> If you looked through the remains that archaeologists have recovered lifetimes later, you'd finger the straight pins and buttons of bone, shell, metal and glass and be reminded of your father William's trade as a tailor. How much would you remember about the brothers Henry and Julius Ulke, among all the boarders who lived with your family? They were photographers but they were also amateur entomologists. Would you associate the microscope slide in the archaeological collection with their study of insects?
>
> Whatever else you might remember of life at 516 10th Street, you would never forget April 14, 1865. The night that President Abraham Lincoln was carried to your home after being shot at Ford's Theatre life changed forever for your family. You wrote in your diary about the immense sadness and grief felt by the family and the way that people tore up carpets and other items from your home as grim souvenirs of the House Where Lincoln Died.

For each of the sites on the map, I needed to identify elements for interpretation. The *tangibles* were different for each and included features such as cisterns and wells, and artifacts such as the sewing implements and microscope slides mentioned above. The *intangibles* included struggle, suffering, and unexpected change of the sort that confronted the Petersens. The idea of change, used above, is a *universal* is one with which archeologists often work. Although some of us may have a difficult time with the concept of "universals," there is enough common ground to make this idea useful.

Archeologists excavate a site near Federal Triangle.

Interpretive products provide *opportunities* for the audience to form intellectual and emotional connections. Readers who are academically-inclined, please note, the focus is on opportunities, not assignments. In my opinion, intellectual connections are under-rated by many interpretive professionals, while emotional connections are under-rated by resource specialists. Emotional connections are essential but sometimes subdued. Archeologists shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that strict objectivity should surround all aspects of resource interpretation. In the above example, I focused on the opportunity for an emotional, empathetic connection more than an intellectual one, but several other stops on the map offer the reverse.

After learning the basics and practicing, I can offer the following points about interpretive writing.

- It is different from writing for scholarly peers.
- It is not a substitute for scholarly reports or other academic writing but it can enliven that sort of writing.
- It can be learned.
- Take the idea of the 'universal' with a grain of salt but don't underestimate its power as a hook.
- It comes with no guarantees that your audience will form the connections you expect.
- Ask for criticism and take it both seriously and lightly.
- Don't neglect the richness of detail of place and time in pursuit of the universal.
- Intellectual connections are valid but may not be sufficient for many audiences.
- Emotional connections are valid and may be necessary for most audiences.

- People will grapple with difficult concepts if they care, but difficult or opaque language forms a barrier to those concepts and stifles the desire to care.

I encourage my archeological colleagues to take the challenge of learning the basics of the interpretive process. Explore the "Effective Interpretation of Archeological Resources: The Archeology-Interpreter Shared Competency Course of Study." You can find the course on the web at <http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/440/module.htm> and supporting resources at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/aad/AFORI/index.htm>. And don't forget to submit your products to the Interpretive Development Program. I was thrilled when the DC archeology map was judged to demonstrate the certification standards for Module 230 on Interpretive Writing.

Barbara Little, Archeologist, National Center for Cultural Resources, Archeology and Ethnography Program, National Park Service

A version of this essay appeared in:

2004 *The Arrowhead, The Newsletter of the Employees and Alumni Association of the National Park Service*, Winter 2004, Volume 1, No. 1.

Sukeek's Cabin
Archeologists have developed tours of Sukeek's Cabin.

Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum is a 560-acre archeological preserve and working farm on the Patuxent River in Calvert County, Maryland. Sukeek's Cabin Site is a 19th to 20th century African American domestic site located on the park. The site was named Sukeek's Cabin in 1996, when archeologists began working with Sukeek's descendants to learn the family story and how it relates to life in the 19th to 20th centuries. It is named for a woman who, according to her family tradition, was enslaved and brought to the United States in the early 1800's.

Map of Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum. Sukeek's Cabin Site is located on the southeast side of the park in the trees. (JPPM)

Sukeek's Cabin had been virtually undisturbed since it was abandoned as a dwelling, some time around 1920. Sukeek's descendants, archeologists, and volunteers are working to learn about the site. Together they study family and local history to understand how people's lives were affected by the change from slavery to freedom. Excavations provide information about the building and the surrounding yard. The work also yields artifacts that give clues about the everyday lives of the people who lived there that are otherwise lost.

The park has an active Public Archeology Program that interprets the history of the cabin through themes that make it relevant to modern visitors. Sukeek's Cabin is set on the margins of the farm. Archeologists lead groups of visitors along a special path to the cabin and point out details along the trail. They talk on the way about the family, the site, and the setting. Upon reaching the site on a clearing on the ridge, volunteers and visitors are asked to imagine daily life for the Gross family ancestors who after a day of work in the fields or in the main house walked up the hill, as they just have. Visitors are directed to "see" an intact house on the ruined foundation and to imagine a yard filled with family on a summer day. They are asked to envision the main house, the other slave cabins, and other structural features that shaped the setting in the past.

The participation of the family in the archeological interpretation of Sukeek's Cabin tells visitors that real people find the past personally significant and relevant to who they are today. Archeologists use personal interaction, imagination, speech, and experiential learning to help people connect with the resource. Visitors—be they volunteers, the public, or schools—find out about the social history of African Americans in the county. They learn to think about the past in juxtaposition to what they see today in the rapidly changing landscape and demographics of the region. Significantly, archeologists who interpret Sukeek's Cabin find that interpretation encourages interaction amongst people of different backgrounds to communicate in new ways.

The population of Calvert County is demographically very different from its 19th-century self. Heritage education programs at this state park illuminate for visitors the value and historical context of the local landscapes that accommodate the rapid population growth threatening their survival. Interpretation helps the public to understand that they have moved into an area with a real history and a distinct identity.

Adapted from:

Uunila, Kirsti
2003 Sukeek's Cabin: Archaeology, A Family's Story, and Building Community, in *Archaeologists and Local Communities: Partners in Exploring the Past*, edited by Linda Derry and Maureen Malloy, Society for American Archaeology, 2003. pp.31-44.

Interpreting the Past to the Public: the Liberty Island Example
William Griswold tells about his experience conducting tours on Liberty Island.

Priscilla Brendler and Jesse Ponz excavate on Liberty Island during the 1999 season.

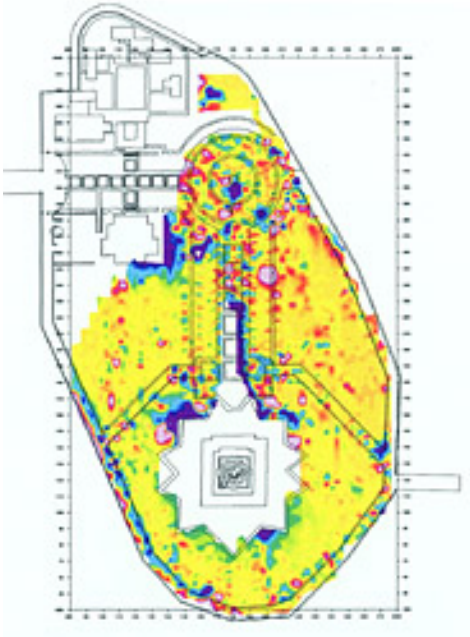
Walking around Liberty Island today the visitor gets little sense as to the appearance of the island in antiquity. A well-manicured, formally designed, landscape greets the visitor as they leave the Circle Line and meander their way toward the Statue of Liberty. Lady Liberty casts a large and prominent shadow (literally and figuratively) across the island and its lesser-known cultural resources; even the walls of Fort Wood fade into a dramatic backdrop for the statue.

Archeological research over the past few years has helped to fill out the picture of the island before the statue. Within the last millennium, the island has been used as a food collection station, a privately owned island with a house and garden, a quarantine station, a fortification, a signaling station, and only recently, relatively speaking, home to Auguste Bartholdi's statue of *Liberty Enlightening the World*. It is appropriate that the island is a World Heritage site since it has been used over the last millennium by Native American, Dutch, British, French, and American people.

Much of this information has been brought to light by historical and archeological research including the production of an Archeological Overview and Assessment, a geophysical investigation of approximately two-thirds of the island, an intensive investigation of a Woodland Period shell midden, a site survey focused on examining anomalies identified by the geophysical investigation, an underwater investigation of areas adjacent to the sea walls, and numerous compliance driven projects. Truly, the 13 or so acres of Liberty Island are some of the best-known, most-studied archeological resources in the Northeast Region.

The visiting public was greatly interested in our various projects on the island. At times, it was difficult to get our work done because so many people were asking questions about the various projects. With 2.7+ million people visiting the site each year (2002 visitation), we were bound to get more than a few questions about our work. Young, old, native New Yorkers and visiting foreigners alike were interested to learn about what archeology could teach us about the past. I like to believe that we not only provided answers to many questions about the archeology of the island, but that we fed an interest about archeology in general.

With the reports from these projects finished, the next goal, at least from my perspective, is to communicate our research and our findings to the public. I see this as a great opportunity to teach many of the visitors something about its history and prehistory. A couple of steps have been made toward fulfilling this goal. A general interest booklet on the whole Liberty Island project has been placed on the internet. Interested individuals can download *The Ground Beneath Her Feet: The Archeology of Liberty Island* by visiting www.nps.gov/phso/archeology and going into the library. Once there, they can download a .pdf file containing the entire booklet. Very soon there will be a link to the booklet from the main Statue of Liberty website found at www.nps.gov/stli. Another step toward dissemination of the archeological information to the public will happen toward the end of 2004 with the publication of Diana diZerega Wall and Anne-Marie Cantwell's book entitled: *Touring Gotham's Archaeological Sites* (Yale University Press 2004). The keenly interested public will then be able to get lots of information on the earlier history of the island from these two sources.



Map produced from the 1999 geophysical survey of Liberty Island.

However, it is not only the keenly interested individual that needs education about the earlier history of the island. I would argue that very few individuals would actively seek out information on the island or its historical or archeological resources. Most visitors may not even be aware that the National Park Service has a website for the Statue of Liberty or will browse the bookstores for Wall's and Cantwell's upcoming book. Many, if not most, of the visitors (personal observation and not a scientific survey) come to Liberty Island just to see the statue. This, however, does not preclude the trip from being an educational experience. Visitors can learn a lot about the statue and the island during a visit.

While it is doubtful that in a post- 9-11 environment visitation to the island/statue will be what it was in the past, there are numerous places to capitalize on an opportunity to educate the public on the history of the island. Waysides are a very good, and inexpensive way to provide information. Visitors to the island must queue up at several locations including Battery Park in Manhattan, Liberty State Park in New Jersey, and on Liberty Island itself. Small waysides could easily be created and placed in selected spots along these queues. I tend to read any and all available information when I am standing in line, and I don't think that I am unique in that regard. In many cases interesting information helps make the wait more pleasant.

Excavation of the prehistoric shell midden on Liberty Island during the 1999 season.

In many cases the follow-through gets lost in the archeological shuffle. Great discoveries are made, illuminating reports are written, but then the information never gets out to the public. Shows on the Discovery Channel and other cable channels and the success of movies like Indiana Jones and Laura Croft indicate that the public has a voracious appetite for archeology. We must not miss this opportunity on Liberty Island.

by William A. Griswold, Ph.D., Archeology Branch—Northeast Cultural Resources Center

The "Big Dig" Central Artery/Tunnel Project

The Big Dig is not only an excavation, but an exhibit about public archeology.

Boston's Big Dig (formally known as the Central Artery/Tunnel Project) is the largest and most complex highway project in the nation's history. The plan includes replacing the aging, elevated portion of Interstate 93, which winds through downtown Boston, with an eight- to- ten lane tunnel.

The scope of the project meant that probably every Massachusetts citizen had been exposed to some basic information about archeology. Additionally, some of the sites were close to tourist destinations in downtown Boston. Archeologists first planned to interpret field archeology to the public while the dig was in progress. Interpreters were assigned specifically to this purpose so the excavation could continue. Viewing platforms were constructed so visitors could peer into the excavations. A wide range of people visited: school groups, historians, tourists, homeless, international students on holiday, and executives. They would then incorporate the materials and findings into exhibits to interpret the past for modern audiences.

The interpreters answered questions, but also used other interpretive methods. Boxes of artifacts from personal and corporate collections were put together so people could “touch” the past and experience the artifacts more closely. A series of handouts explained the site. The public in general was most interested in the live archeologists and the artifact displays, although teachers and history buffs in particular collected the handouts. A kiosk was placed near the Freedom Trail to attract people to the site. The lab hosted tours by appointment so the public could learn that archeologists do more than dig alone. A slide show was also put together to interpret the work to local organizations and clubs.

The CRM firms at the same time compiled an Interpretive Plan. They noted the successes and problems of each interpretive method in the course of the work, and evaluated the techniques. They then created a plan with participation from local historical organizations to recommend a course for future interpretation.

When the collections from the Big Dig were turned over to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for curation, the big question was, "Now what?" How can we take hundreds of thousands of artifacts and a couple of linear feet of very technical reports and translate them for the public? Although the primary goal of the Commission's Archaeological Curation Center center's is caring for the state's collections, a close second is creative public education. The Big Dig provided a rare opportunity to bring an archeological project full circle, expanding MHC's public education program in the process.

They began work on a full-scale exhibit: Archaeology of the Central Artery Project: Highway to the Past. Since the highway was the only unifying theme among these sites, they chose to organize the exhibit as a kind of historical tour of the neighborhoods through which the artery passes, highlighting common topics along the way. The predominately female staff decided to spotlight the lives of women in each neighborhood. They also chose to focus on past diet, the history of technology, and general archeological techniques.

One sign of the exhibit's success was the number of class trips among third to tenth grades. Thousands of students have visited. They begin with a quick introduction to archeology and what it has to do with the Big Dig. Since most school buses get stuck in construction-related traffic on the way, the archeologists designed a perfect segue. Younger students get an activity kit with scavenger hunts, word searches, short art projects, and artifact projects that they complete as they walk through. Older students participate in the "Experts" program. Small groups are assigned to different sites in the exhibit and, with guidance from staff archeologists, conduct small research projects that help them become experts. Then they give their classmates a guided tour. The program can be scaled according to skills, and the archeologists are flexible about how the students interpret the site. One group, for example, chose to interpret theirs in the form of a poem.

Adapted from:

Lewis, Ann-Eliza H. and Brona G. Simon
1999 Mining the Big Dig: Tapping the Education Potential of Boston's Central Artery Project. The Future of Public Archeology, *Common Ground*, Winter.

Recovery of the Longfellow Landscape
Archeologists at Longfellow NHS host tours and school groups to their site.

Archeology at Longfellow National Historic Site complements the Recovery of the Longfellow Landscape project. The site is an outstanding example of a historic place representing the themes of arts and literature. For almost half a century (1837-1882) this was the home of one of the world's foremost poets, scholars and educators, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He and his immediate and extended family and friends played a central role in the intellectual and artistic life of 19th-century America and are credited with shaping a distinctly American identity and culture.

Archeology provided an opportunity to show visitors a never-before-seen view of history at the site. Archeologists were already a constant presence as they performed compliance work prior to the installation of new utilities and wells. Plans for

An archeolist at work, Longfellow NHS.

the landscape also included restoration of a formal garden located prominently on a path that visitors walk to the visitors' center and historic mansion. When geophysical surveys found subsurface resources beneath the topsoil, the archeologists knew to prepare for almost constant public interpretation.

Previous excavations on the property had included public education components, such as visits by local school groups or the press, but never before had there been such high visibility over such a long period of time. Additionally, archeologists realized that it was difficult for visitors to envision the historically agrarian setting within the house's modern urban context. Archeologists wanted to bring into focus the changing landscape over time so visitors would relate to the evolution of the site. Visitors needed to realize the themes of change as well as the historical significance of the site. Archeology provided a medium and a means for visitors to understand these concepts.

The archeologists created a plan to encourage public engagement in the site through making themselves available to interpret what was going on. They knew people were curious about archeology and what archeologists do, and set out to reach as many audiences as they could. Interns helped in the lab, in excavation and interpretation. A sign presented the excavations to visitors passing on the walkway. Question and answer sessions at the site were set up throughout the day. Visitors could take a two-page handout for more detailed answers to common questions. The archeologists also clued the interpretive staff in, even though they were not directly involved in the project, so they could also answer visitors' questions.

Interpretive opportunities took place on large and small scales. Fourteen students from a nearby university took part in the excavations in the fall. They completed their final papers for the course on the basis of excavations and historical materials available about the property. Many other people wanted to get a meaningful experience out of their visit by talking with the archeologists. Most people were happy to talk while the archeologists worked, so they didn't have to lose progress while conducting longer conversations. One weekend, the archeologists oversaw an archeological sandbox for kids to dig in that was modeled on a trench. Overall, however, archeologists found that a lecture and information series to local groups was the most successful.

Archeological interpretation at Longfellow NHS concentrated on the history of the site but the process of outreach encouraged a sense of connection between the public and the place. Students found archeology as a tool for learning about the past. Visitors took advantage of having real archeologists available to connect on their curiosity about the work. The interpretive products and offerings produced good public relations with the neighborhood. Overall, archeology provided enriching opportunities for people to get curious about what went on over time at the Longfellow property.

Adapted from:

Recovery of the Longfellow Landscape
Longfellow NHS Home Page

Haynie, Michael K.
2003 Archeologists on Display, Delivered at the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference.

Submit Your Own Story

Archeology and interpretation benefit from collaboration. What programs have you developed? What has worked or not worked? Please share your own experiences as a case study. We seek archeologists' narratives of approximately 1000 words and an image or two in length that discuss their particular perspectives on, and experiences with, interpretation.

You might talk about an experience with interpreting archeology that was particularly important to you, contributed to an overall park story, or you feel illustrates why archeologists should do interpretation or how they might successfully collaborate with interpreters. Feel free to think broadly and discuss exhibits, tours, special programs, influence on policy and planning, etc. Reflect on the contribution of archeology from an interpretive standpoint and as an archeologist.

If you have a clear photograph of yourself in action, a pertinent artifact or scene, or group shot, we'd like to use it with your piece in the guide. Please send high-resolution digital images or, if you have slides or prints, you can send them by courier to us so that we can scan them here and return them to you. (Regular U.S. Mail is not a good carrier in this case because irradiation melts plastic and ruins photographs.) If there are recognizable people in your photographs, then we will need signed permission to use those photographs on the web.

For more information, or to submit a case study, please contact Barbara Little, barbara_little@nps.gov.

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